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California launches nations largest telehealth network

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Yesterday, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger was joined by local technology and health care leaders as well as U.S. Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra to announce the launch of the California Telehealth Network (CTN) – the largest dedicated telehealth network in the country. The ambitious project is designed to provide more reliable health care information access in the state's rural and urban areas.

The CTN system is designed to connect telehealth devices across the state, with inaugural sites at Oroville Hospital in Oroville and CommuniCare Health Center in West Sacramento. In all, the first phase of CTN will link 800 sites over the next three years. According to the Governor, some of the benefits of the new system include security and performance improvements and request prioritization for emergency care.

The network is funded with federal and state dollars as well as public-private partnerships totaling \$30 million for the first phase. California received \$22 million in federal grants from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and also utilized state and private funds from the California Emerging Technology Fund, the California HealthCare Foundation, United Healthcare, the National Coalition for Healthcare Integration and the University of California. AT&T will be managing the broadband services needed to run the network.

The University of California will be primarily responsible for managing the network and recently broke ground on a new facility, which will teach students how to use telehealth as part of their practices. Telehealth continues to grow as medical practice as broadband networks extend into rural areas, increasing opportunities for access. Telehealth networks extend through several states with large rural communities, however, California's stands to be the largest given its size and reach into both rural and

urban communities. The areas outlined in the first phase are often cut off from the same level of care available in the state's more affluent locales.

Technology and broadband initiatives such as telehealth have been a centerpiece of the Governor's agenda. As [CivSource reported](#) earlier this year, California has taken significant strides toward reforming its procurement processes to more effectively manage big ticket projects such as this. The Governor also appointed Deputy Secretary Jonah Frolich for Health IT to the state's Health and Human Services Agency to manage initiatives like the CTN.

Telehealth services offer online and video conference access to medical specialists for clinics and patients that lack access or are understaffed with these types of professionals.

The California Telehealth Network website is also [live now](#).

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Drawing A Line In the Sand

"Looking through the scope of national politics, I would make the case that the governors' races this year are as important as the federal races, if not more important."

-Nick Ayers, the executive director of the Republican Governors Association on the 37 governor races upcoming in November ([New York Times](#), 8-10)



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